



U.S Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590
www.dot.gov/affairs/briefing.htm

News

DOT 123-09
Monday, August 17, 2009
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DOT Proposes Fine for Sunoco Pipeline, L.P. for Pennsylvania Accident

The U.S. Department of Transportation today announced it is issuing a probable violation and proposed civil penalty notice to Sunoco Pipeline Limited Partnership (L.P.) for alleged federal pipeline safety regulation violations. The proposed \$232,900 fine follows the Department's investigation into the company's November 2008 pipeline failure in Murrysville, PA.

"Promoting safe operations remains a major priority for the Department and assessing civil penalties to pipeline companies is a key part of our oversight mission," said DOT's Deputy Secretary John Porcari. "It is important for pipeline operators to remain vigilant in their operations to prevent ruptures from occurring to keep our communities safe while preventing the disruption of energy supplies."

The proposed fine, proposed compliance order, and probable violations are the direct results of a thorough investigation recently completed by the Department's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). As a result of the investigation, PHMSA alleges that Sunoco Pipeline, L.P. failed to meet regulatory requirements for properly operating and maintaining its pipeline, and failed to ensure that all of its staff were adequately qualified. PHMSA's requirements for pipeline companies to have effective operator qualification programs help ensure personnel can perform assigned tasks including maintenance, repair, and monitoring activities, and are able to recognize and react to abnormal operating conditions to prevent failures.

"The Department expects pipeline operators and their personnel to take safety as seriously as we do. We were very fortunate the Murrysville incident did not result in more serious consequences," Deputy Secretary Porcari added.

On Nov. 25, 2008, the National Response Center alerted PHMSA to a Sunoco Pipeline, L.P. hazardous liquid pipeline failure in Murrysville, PA, about 20 miles east of Pittsburgh, while workers conducted maintenance activities. The failure resulted in the evacuation of numerous stores, restaurants and roads in the immediate vicinity due to the dousing of gasoline and subsequent vapors emitting from the 11,760 gallons (280 barrels) of spilled product. PHMSA and its state pipeline safety partners oversee about 4,300 miles of Sunoco Pipeline, L.P. hazardous liquid transmission pipelines in 12 states.

PHMSA's pipeline inspectors and its state partners are committed to ensuring the safety of America's pipeline transportation system and will continue to carefully monitor Sunoco Pipeline, L.P. activities.

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